



image

50
JUNE

DIGITAL
EDITION

SPAWN



McFARLANE
BRIAN

image® COMICS PRESENTS: "CHOICES"



Dedicated to my family:
**WANDA, CYAN AND
KATE**

Spawn #49 Summary:

Al confides in Granny Blake his fear for her safety if he continues to visit her but, his concern is met with a gentle sermon. When Cogliostro breaks into Spawn's personal asylum, he discovers that the costume is beginning to possess him. Cogliostro, showing no fear, is swallowed and vomited by the cape. Able to free Al from the evil cape's grip, Cog admonishes him to harness its power. Finally, Al humbly asks Cog for help. Terry visits the doctor who orders routine tests. Preoccupied with his pending test results and the reconstruction of Wynn's murder conspiracy against him, Terry blacks out on the drive home, becomes involved in a serious accident and ends up in the hospital. Wanda receives the phone call about Terry's accident and rushes to the hospital. Cygor lurks in the New York City concrete jungle looking for Simmons. On edge since the mysterious file was slipped under their door and feeling the financial pressure of starting their new business, Twitch pulls his gun when the car blows a rod. Sam calms the apologetic Twitch down and says he has a little surprise for him.

FOR IMAGE COMICS
LARRY MARDER - exec. director

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CHECK OUT THE SPAWN WEB SITE AT... <http://www.spawn.com>

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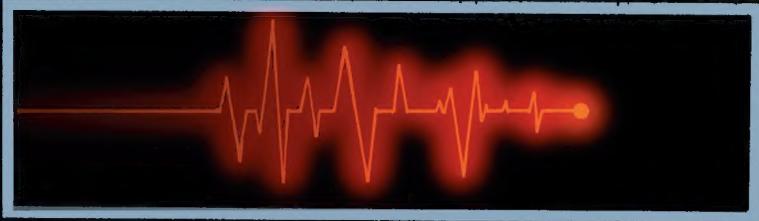
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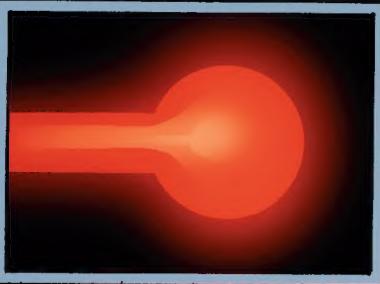
AT FIRST, HE THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE COLD. SOON IT DEVELOPED INTO SEVERE HACKING. NEITHER SEEMED OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

WHY WOULD THEY?

THEN CAME DIZZINESS, FOLLOWED BY A FAINTING SPELL. THAT'S WHEN HE STARTED TO GET ANXIOUS.



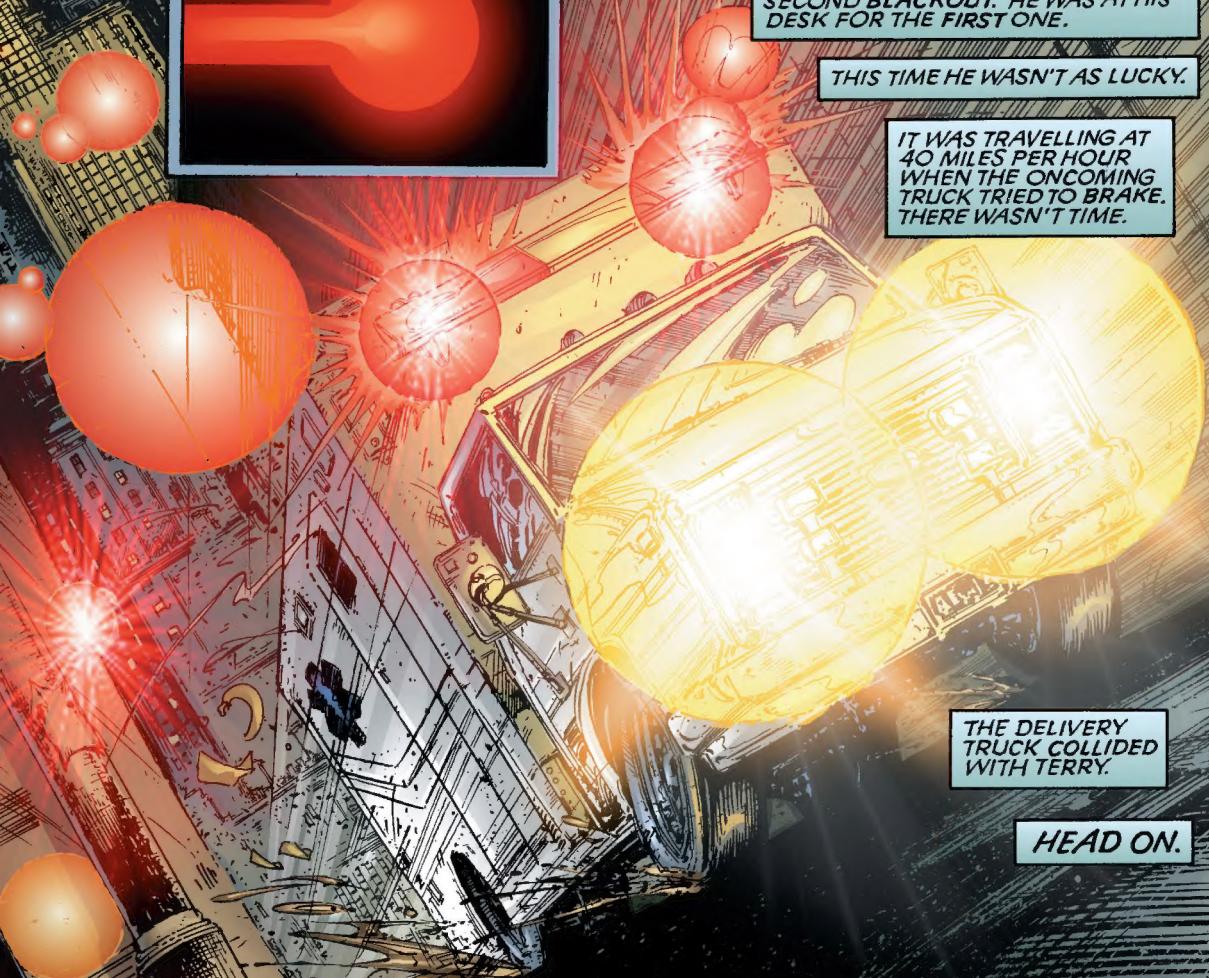
HIS FAMILY DOCTOR SENT HIM TO A SPECIALIST. THAT WAS A WEEK AGO. NO ONE KNEW. NOT HIS EMPLOYER, HIS FRIENDS OR HIS OWN FAMILY.



ON HIS DRIVE HOME TONIGHT, TERRY FITZGERALD EXPERIENCED HIS SECOND BLACKOUT. HE WAS AT HIS DESK FOR THE FIRST ONE.

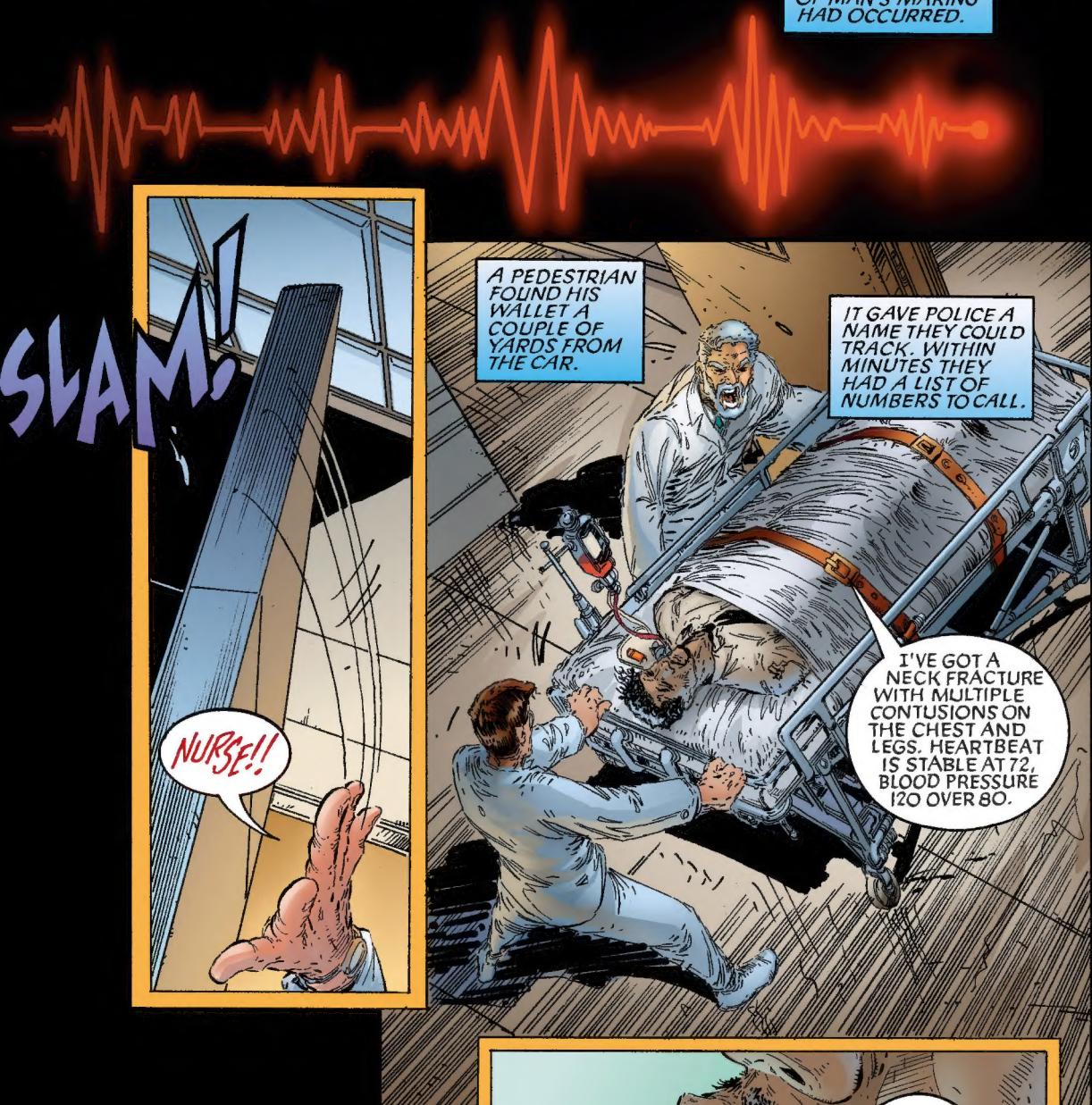
THIS TIME HE WASN'T AS LUCKY.

IT WAS TRAVELLING AT 40 MILES PER HOUR WHEN THE ONCOMING TRUCK TRIED TO BRAKE. THERE WASN'T TIME.



THE DELIVERY TRUCK COLLIDED WITH TERRY.

HEAD ON.



ESPECIALLY HIS WIFE.

SHE KNEW SOMETHING WAS TERRIBLY WRONG THE MOMENT SHE RECEIVED THE CALL.

"GET TO THE HOSPITAL." THAT'S ALL SHE NEEDED TO HEAR.

AFTER LEAVING CYAN, HER DAUGHTER, WITH THE NEIGHBORS, SHE RACED FRANTICALLY TO ST. LUKE'S MEDICAL CENTER.

THOUGH SHE DROVE COURTEOUSLY, A DOZEN LAWS WERE BROKEN.

SHE DIDN'T CARE.

MISS?
MISS?!
MAY I
HELP
YOU?

THEY BROUGHT MY HUSBAND IN. TERRY FITZGERALD. ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES AGO. HE'D BEEN IN A CAR ACCIDENT.

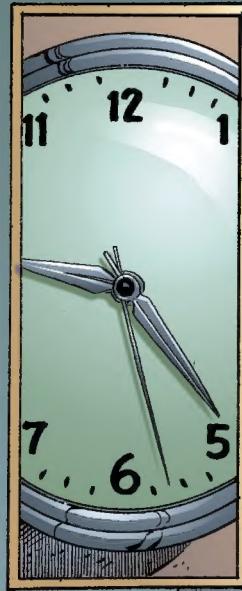
IS HE DOWN THIS HALL?

LET ME CHECK FOR YOU.

A QUICK CALL LATER...

SECOND FLOOR. HE'S STILL IN X-RAY--
WON'T BE OUT FOR ANOTHER HALF HOUR.
YOU CAN...

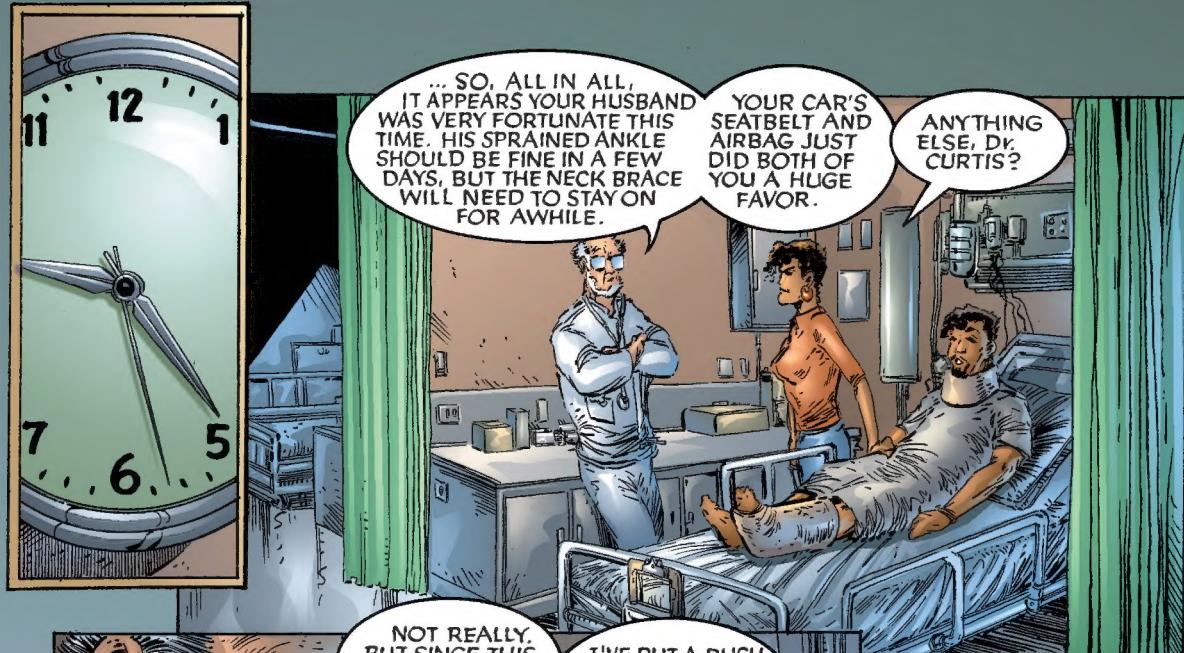
SHE DOESN'T NEED TO HEAR ANY MORE.



... SO, ALL IN ALL, IT APPEARS YOUR HUSBAND WAS VERY FORTUNATE THIS TIME. HIS SPRAINED ANKLE SHOULD BE FINE IN A FEW DAYS, BUT THE NECK BRACE WILL NEED TO STAY ON FOR AWHILE.

YOUR CAR'S SEATBELT AND AIRBAG JUST DID BOTH OF YOU A HUGE FAVOR.

ANYTHING ELSE, DR. CURTIS?



NOT REALLY, BUT SINCE THIS IS HIS SECOND BLACKOUT,

... I'VE PUT A RUSH REQUEST ON THE RESULTS OF THAT C.A.T SCAN DR. ROLLINS DID LAST WEEK.*

WHAT TEST?! WHEN DID YOU...

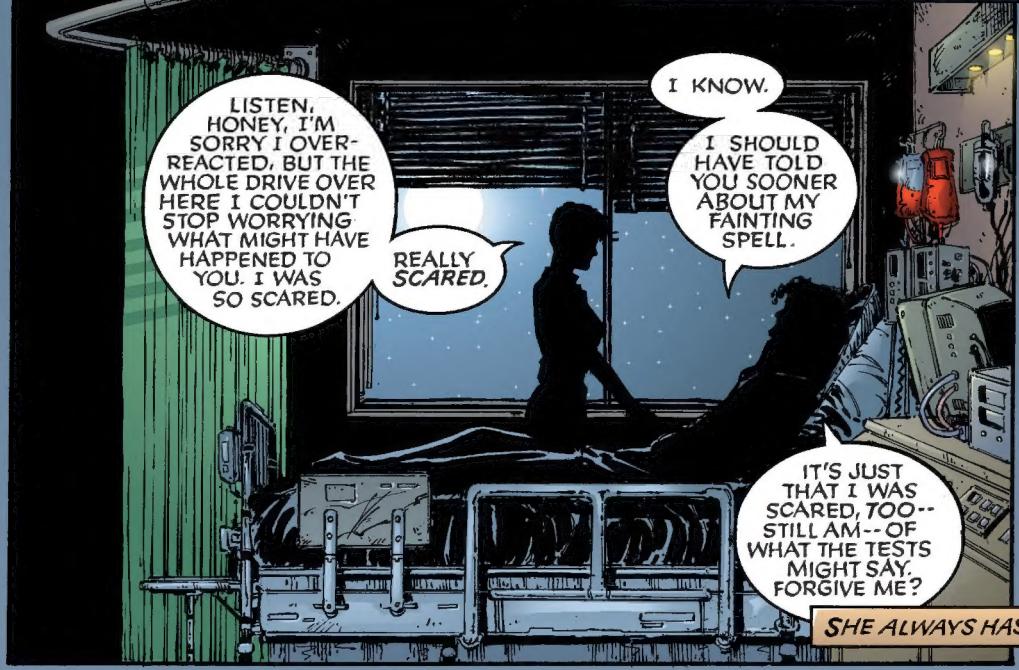
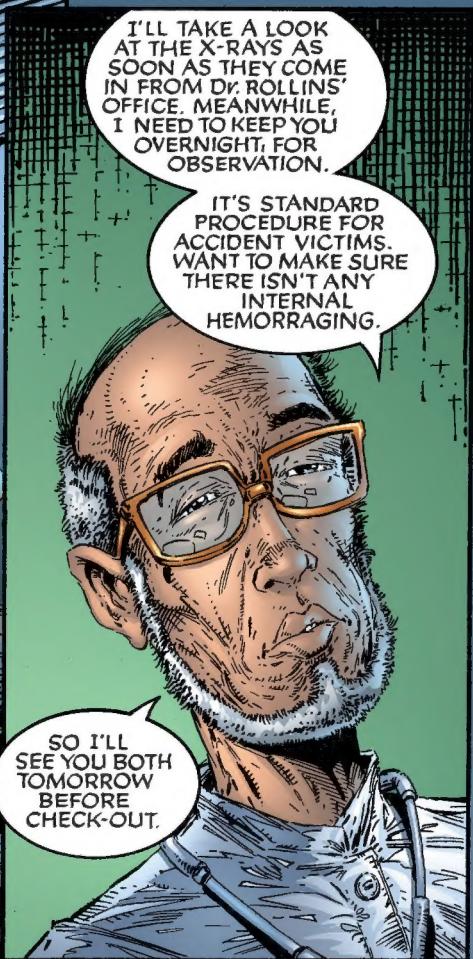
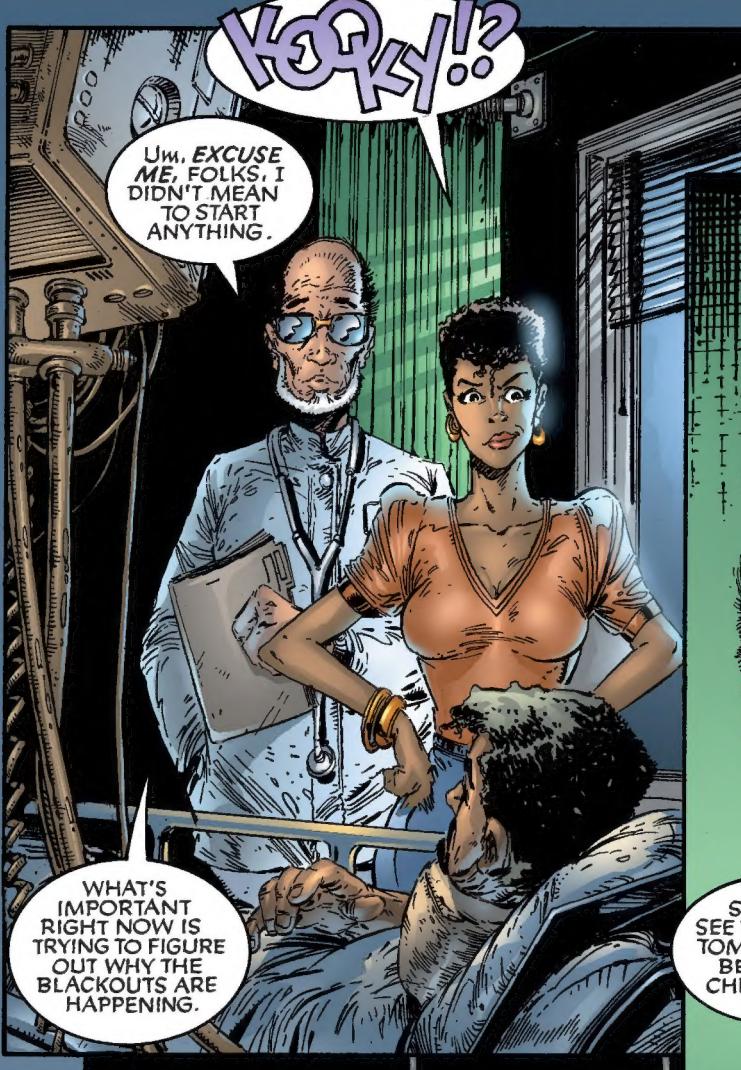


HEE HEE...
UH, YOU SEE,
WANDA, I DIDN'T
WANT YOU TO GET
WORRIED ABOUT
A LITTLE
TESTING.

I'M A
DEAD
DUCK.

YOU KNOW ME. ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR BEST INTERESTS. I KNOW HOW KOOKY YOU CAN GET.





SOMEWHERE
IN THE
SHADOWS...

YOUR RECENT
SEPARATION FROM
THE SYMBIOTE HAS
ACCELERATED ITS
EVOLUTION, WITHOUT
ANY GUIDANCE FROM
YOU. THIS IS A VERY
SERIOUS PROBLEM.

YOU SEE, RIGHT
NOW THE COSTUME
IS RUNNING IN ALL
DIRECTIONS AT ONCE.
IT'S LOST, AND, LIKE
ANYTHING ELSE THAT
BECOMES LOST IT
WANTS TO RETURN
HOME.

TO
HELL.

PRECISELY.
AND SINCE YOU'RE
ATTACHED TO IT,
YOU'RE GOING ALONG
FOR THE RIDE.

SO
WHAT
CAN I
DO?

IT'S RECON-
FIGURING ITSELF
AT A TREMENDOUS
RATE. USUALLY, THE
METAMORPHOSIS
TAKES YEARS TO
COMPLETE.

AND THAT'S
ONLY IF THE
COSTUME AND
ITS HOST ARE IN
SYNC... WHICH
YOU TWO
DEFINATELY
AREN'T.



DON'T TRIGGER IT. IT FEEDS OFF YOU-- YOUR EVIL. WHEN IT CAN'T DRAIN FROM YOU, THE WORMS BECOME THE CATALYST.

SO NOW I'M MADE OF EVIL.

NOT EXACTLY, AL.

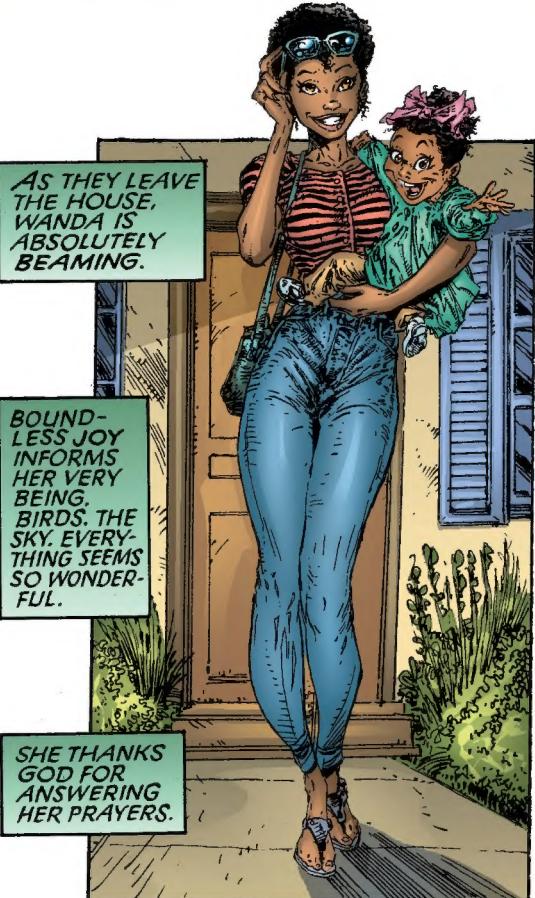
BUT YOUR ANGER, EVIL AND SIN COME IN MANY FORMS, YET ANGER IS THE ULTIMATE PIPELINE. NOTHING GOOD HAS EVER COME FROM RAGE. YOU'VE BEEN MAD SINCE YOUR REBIRTH -- ALMOST CONSTANTLY. THAT'S WHAT'S FEEDING IT.

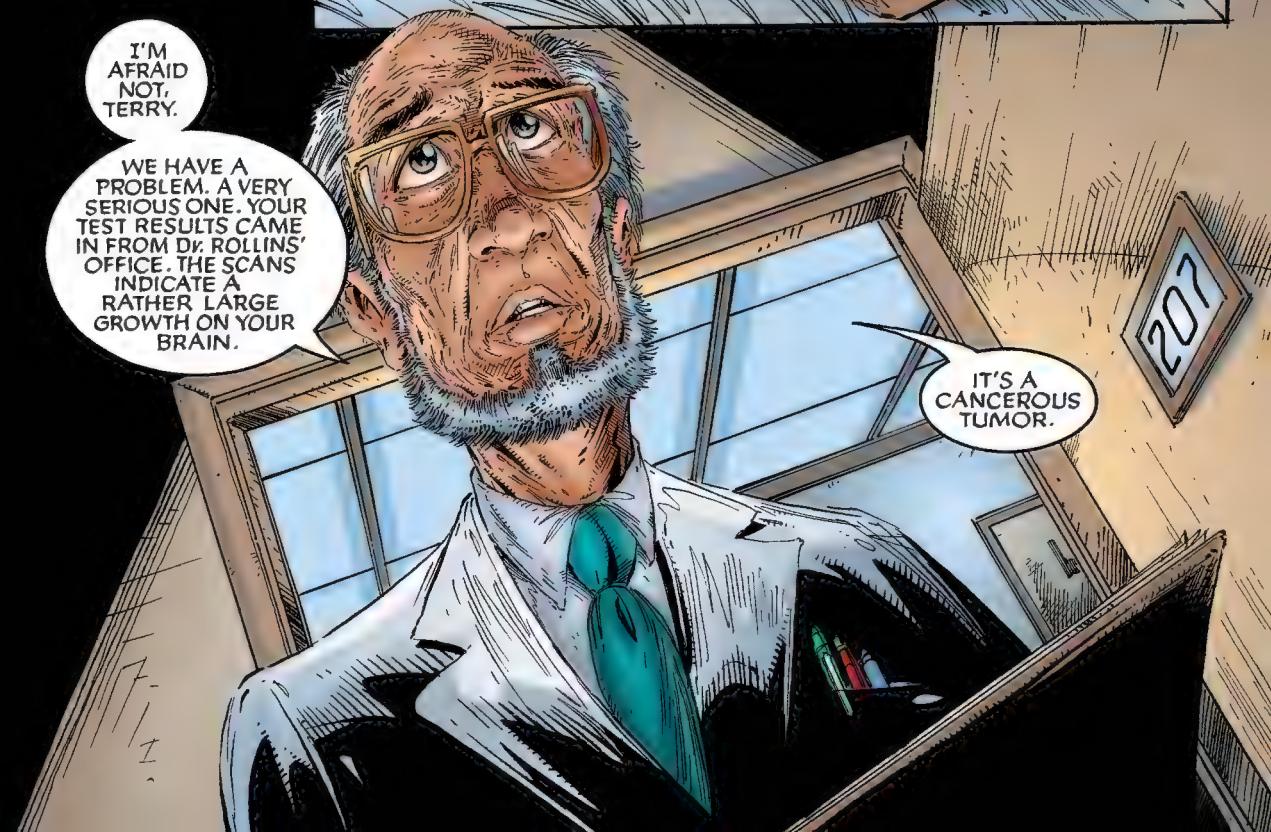
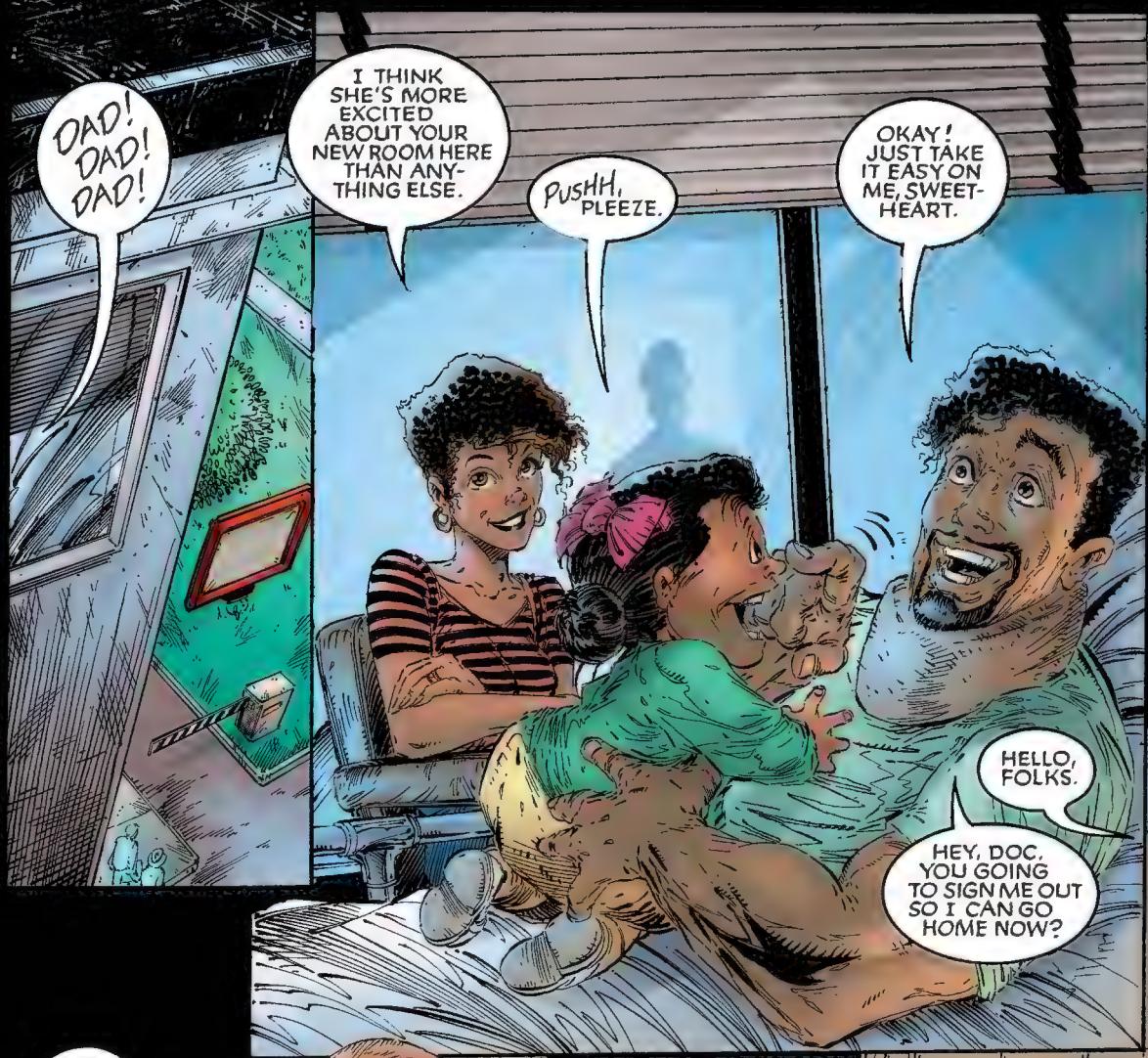
YOU HAVE TO LET IT GO. WHATEVER IS FESTERING INSIDE YOU,
LET IT GO!
PLEASE, FOR ALL OF US-- FIND SOME INNER PEACE.
JUST LET THE ANGER **DIE.**

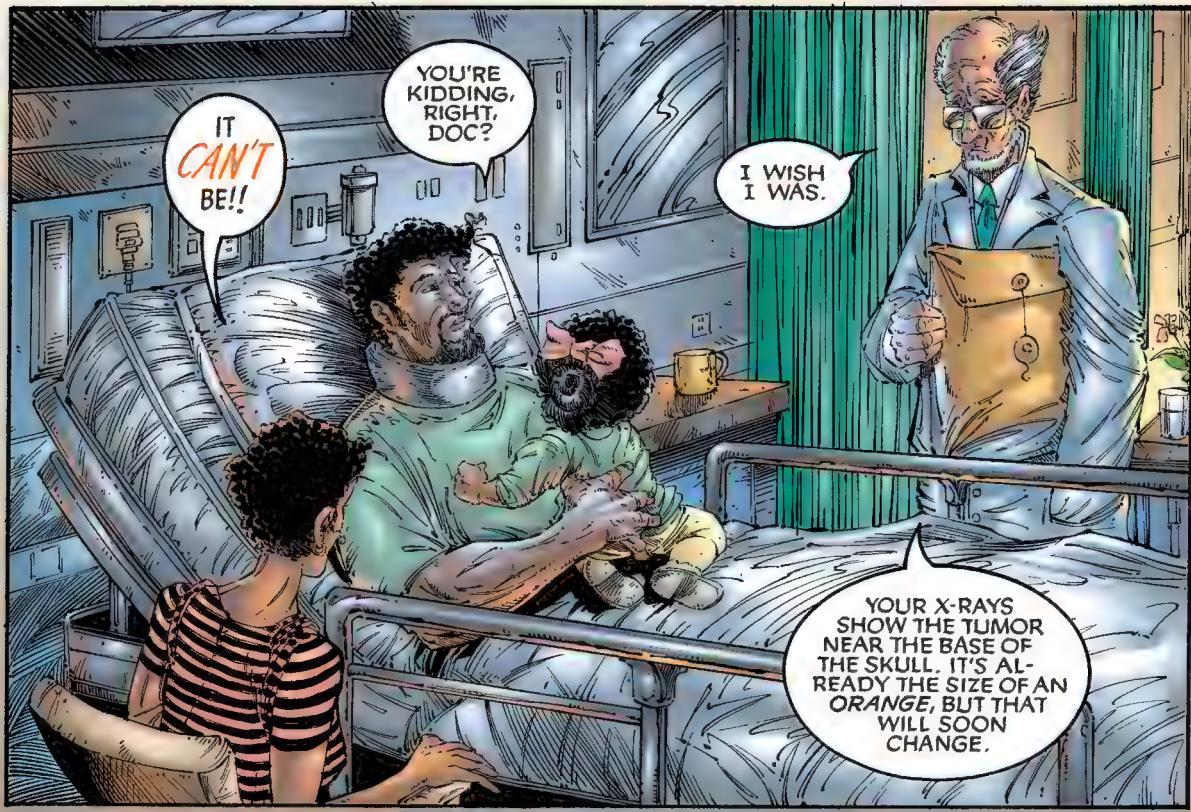
BEFORE YOU LEAVE, COG, I HAVE TO KNOW SOMETHING. WHO ARE YOU?

A REFLECTION OF YOU. WE'RE THE SAME, AL. WE BOTH USED TO BE REAL, A LIFETIME AGO.

IN SHORT... I'M A SPAWN.







TWENTY HOURS
AND A BATTERY
OF TESTS LATER...

YOU SEE
THIS CLOUDY
AREA-- IT
REPRESENTS
THE CANCER.

WHEN YOU
HAD YOUR COLD,
A VIRUS ENTERED
YOUR SYSTEM. USUALLY,
THE BODY COMBATS A
VIRUS WITH A NUMBER
OF DIFFERENT DEFENSES.

BUT AS YOUR
COLD GOT WORSE,
IT DEVELOPED INTO
AN EARLY STAGE OF
PNEUMONIA. AS THE
VIRUS GREW STRONGER,
IT TRIGGERED THE
LATENT CELLS OF
THE CANCER
TO GROW.

MEANING
YOU'VE ALWAYS
HAD THIS IN YOU,
JUST IN A DORMANT
STATE. YOU, LIKE
MILLIONS OF OTHERS,
WERE PROBABLY
BORN WITH IT.

UNFORTUNATELY,
ITS POSITIONING
MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE
FOR US TO OPERATE.
TO REMOVE IT *ALL*, I'D
HAVE TO REMOVE PART
OF THE BRAIN, *TOO*.
THIS IS COMPOUNDED
BY THE FACT THAT
THE TUMOR IS
MALIGNANT.

SO IT'D JUST
GROW BACK, EVEN
IF YOU COULD
REMOVE IT.

YES.

MEANING
I'M GOING TO
DIE. ISN'T THAT
RIGHT, DOCTOR?
H-HOW MUCH
TIME DO I
HAVE?

MALIGNANT.

TERRY
SQUEEZES
WANDA
EVEN
HARDER.

AT ITS
CURRENT RATE
OF GROWTH, ABOUT
TWO MONTHS, BUT
THERE IS A SERIES OF
PROCEDURES THAT
CAN SLOW THE
SPREAD OF IT.

WHILE ARRANGING FOR CYAN TO STAY WITH CLOSE FRIENDS WANDA TELLS THEM ONLY THAT SHE NEEDS SOME TIME ALONE TO SORT THINGS OUT.

HER FRIENDS PRY NO FURTHER AS SHE MUSTERS A WEAK SMILE, SAYING SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT, BEFORE LEAVING.

HER GUARD GOES DOWN THE MOMENT SHE ARRIVES HOME.

SO DOES SHE.

DAYS LATER...

GRANNIE?

AL? YOU BACK SO SOON?* I THOUGHT YOU WOULD. NOW COME INTO THE LIGHT SO I CAN SEE YOU BETTER.

SEE?! BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE--

BLIND? I AM. IT WAS JUST A JOKE, AL. YOU'VE BECOME SO SERIOUS SINCE YOU MOVED TO HEAVEN. REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO MAKE ME LAUGH?

I MISS THAT PART OF YOU. WHY HAS THAT DISAPPEARED?

I DO.

I DON'T KNOW. BUT THAT'S PART OF WHY I'M HERE.

*LAST ISSUE -- Tom.

A FRIEND TOLD ME TO FIND INNER PEACE. SOMETHING CALMING. YOU ALWAYS GAVE ME THOSE FEELINGS WHEN I WAS ALIVE.

IF I CAN HELP BRING YOUR LAUGHTER, IT'D MAKE MY DAY. IT'S TOO EASY TO FORGET WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT IN LIFE.

I SEE NOW I TOOK THAT FOR GRANTED.

SO I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FAVOR. COULD YOU GO SEE TERRY?...GIVE HIM SOME HOPE FOR TOMORROW?

TERRY?

WE ALL DO THAT, CHILD. IT'S PART OF BEING HUMAN.

YEAH. THINGS HAVE REALLY BEEN TOUGH ON HIM AND WANDA SINCE HE GOT SICK. THE DOCTORS SAY...

...oh, LISTEN TO ME.

YOU'RE AN ANGEL. YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW WHY HE'S DYING.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

LATER THAT WEEK...

THE DOCTORS SAY YOUR MEDICATION IS HELPING CONTROL THE SWELLING A BIT. ISN'T THAT GREAT?

SURE.

BUT THE SIDE EFFECTS ARE SCREWING UP THE REST OF YOUR BODY. YOU HAVE TO FIGHT IT, BABY. DON'T GIVE IN. NOT NOW. I NEED YOU TOO MUCH. SO DOES CYAN.

TELL CYAN I MISS HER. I LOVE HER--AND YOU. MAYBE IF I'D BEEN A BETTER HUSBAND NONE OF THIS WOULD--

HUSH!
YOU DIDN'T HAVE CONTROL OVER THIS. IT ISN'T YOUR FAULT.

WANDA STAYS AT HIS BEDSIDE AS MUCH AS SHE CAN, TRYING TO KEEP HIS SPIRITS UP. MANY TIMES THE NURSES JUST LET HER STAY THROUGH THE NIGHT.

EXHAUSTED THIS NIGHT AS WELL, SHE SLEEPS, UNAWARE OF THE SENTINEL BESIDE HER.

TERRY USED
TO BE HIS
BEST FRIEND.

BUT NO MORE.

TERRY STOLE HIS
WIFE FROM HIM.
GAVE HER THE
CHILD HE NEVER
COULD. PROTECTED
THE MAN WHO
ORDERED HIS DEATH.

WHY SHOULD
HE HELP HIM--
ESPECIALLY
NOW, WHEN
HIS Symbiote
IS BEHAVING
SO ERRATICALLY.

SINCE COMING
BACK FROM THE
DEAD AS A
HELLSPAWN, AL
HAS DISCOVERED
HIS FRIEND'S
TRUE SIDE.

THAT OF A
TRAITOR.

COG TOLD HIM TO RELAX.
NOT USE HIS POWERS.

AND HE WON'T.
NOT FOR HIM.
HE'S NOT WORTH
GOING TO HELL FOR.

SO WHY DID
HE COME?

TO GLOAT?

AND WHY DID
HE SAVE TERRY
AWHILE BACK?*

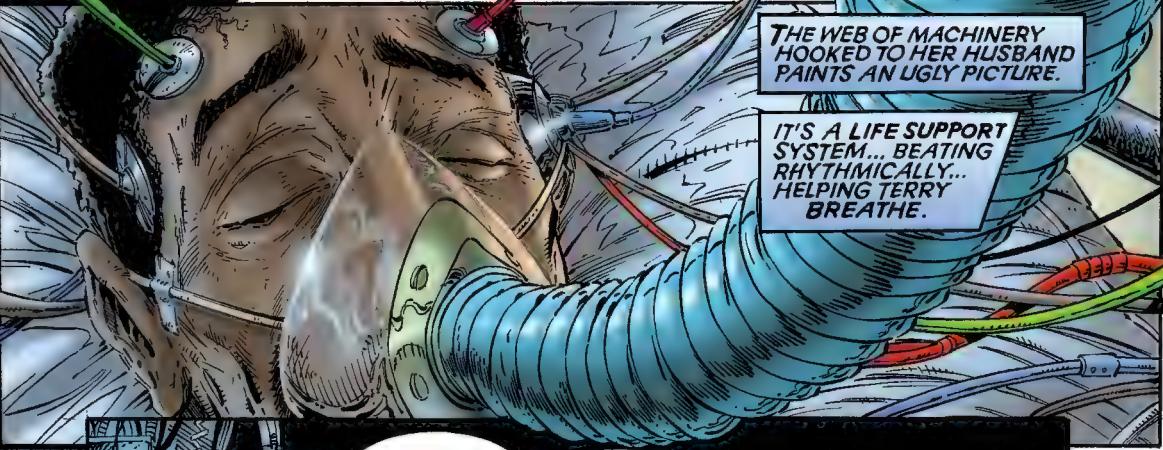
MAYBE HE DID WANT
TO HELP... BUT NOT
TO THE EXTENT OF
MAKING THAT KIND OF
SACRIFICE. NOT FOR
TERRY.

CONFUSED,
HE LEAVES.



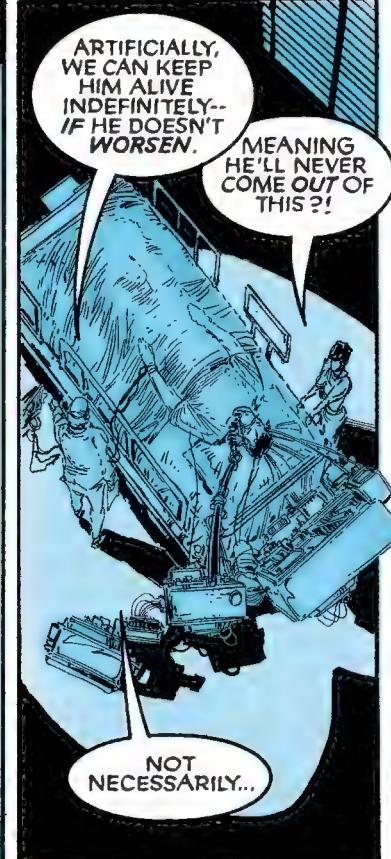
**DEAR
GOD.**





THE WEB OF MACHINERY HOOKED TO HER HUSBAND PAINTS AN UGLY PICTURE.

IT'S A LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM... BEATING RHYTHMICALLY... HELPING TERRY BREATHE.



"...BUT THE CHANCE FOR ANY NORMALITY IS GONE. IF HE DOES WAKE FROM THIS, HE WON'T BE THE SAME. EXPECT LIMITED MOTOR FUNCTIONS, IF NOT PARALYSIS. HE WON'T KNOW HIS OWN NAME."

AS THE DAYS PASS, MORE DETAILS BECOME CLEAR.

THE SAD PROGNOSIS DOES NOT CHANGE.

"THAT'S NOT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE CANCER, WHICH WE CAN'T STOP. I'M SORRY, MS. BLAKE. I WISH I COULD BE MORE HOPEFUL."

TERRY WON'T SEE HIS DAUGHTER GROW INTO A WOMAN.

"IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, DOCTOR. CAN I... CAN I BE ALONE WITH HIM, PLEASE."

CYAN WON'T EVER BOUNCE ON HER DADDY'S KNEE AGAIN.

AND WORSE-- CYAN MIGHT NOT EVEN REMEMBER HER FATHER WHEN SHE'S OLDER.

"OF COURSE."

AS FOR WANDA, SHE'LL NOT HAVE THE CHANCE TO GROW OLD WITH A MAN SHE SO DESPERATELY LOVES.



AT THE TENDER AGE OF TWENTY-NINE, WANDA SHOULD BE FULL OF LIFE, LOOKING FORWARD TO EACH NEW DAY AND ITS ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES.

NOT ANYMORE. FOR THE SECOND TIME, SHE WILL OUTLIVE HER HUSBAND -- ONE, KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY FIVE YEARS AGO, AND NOW ANOTHER, BEING EATEN ALIVE BY CANCER.

SO SHE RETREATS INWARD, SHUTTING HERSELF OFF FROM EVERYTHING, EVERYONE. IT'S THE ONLY WAY SHE HAS TO HANDLE HER PAIN:

...TO BECOME COMPLETELY NUMB TO IT ALL.

JUST LIKE HIM.
HE'S LOST THE PRECIOUS THINGS, TOO.

HE TORTURES HIMSELF CONSTANTLY WITH HIS UNREALISTIC HOPES THAT HE CAN GET HER BACK AGAIN.

IT'S ALL
THAT'S LEFT.
FALSE HOPE.

AND A LOVE
THAT'S
NEVER WANED.

THAT LOVE
IS TO BECOME
A CURSE.

BECAUSE HE'D
PROMISED HER,
ON THEIR
HONEYMOON, TO
ALWAYS KEEP
HER HAPPY.

FOREVER.
HE STILL
REMEMBERS
THE TEARS
IN HER EYES,
AND THE
LOVE SHE
GAVE HIM.

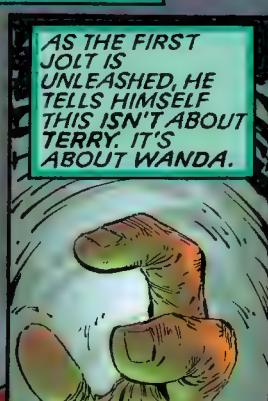
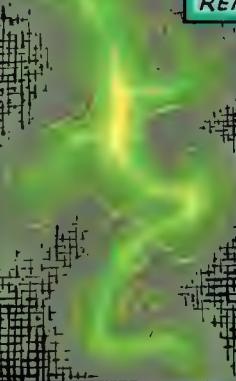
THE ONE
WORD
CONTINUES TO
HAUNT HIM.
FOREVER.
FOREVER.

FOREVER.

I PROMISED
YOU, WANDA.

EVEN IF IT COSTS
HIM ALL HIS
REMAINING HOPE.

AS THE FIRST
JOLT IS
UNLEASHED, HE
TELLS HIMSELF
THIS ISN'T ABOUT
TERRY. IT'S
ABOUT WANDA.



TERRY'S BODY
ARCHES AGAINST
THE PAIN. A
SPASTIC FINGER
CATCHES THE
LACING THAT
HOLDS
SPAWN'S
FACE TO
HIS OWN.

SPAWN BARELY
NOTICES.

HE'S NOT
THINKING
ABOUT
HIS LIFE.

HIS WIFE.

THEY'LL NEVER BE
TOGETHER AGAIN,
SO ALL THAT
MATTERS IS HER
HAPPINESS-- AND
HIS PROMISE.

IT'S TIME HE
LET HER GO.

I
USED
TO BE.

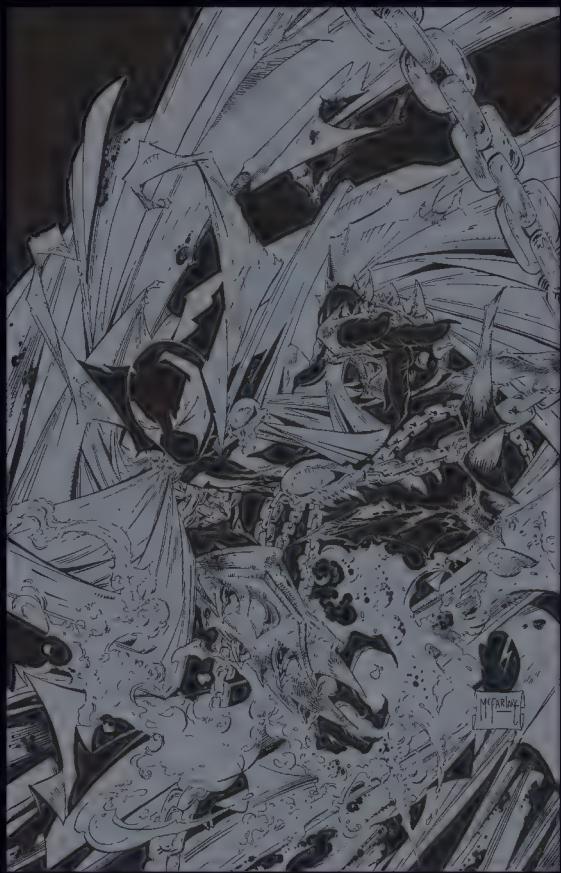
HE HESITATES,
THEN HEARS THE
WORD AGAIN:

FOREVER!

THEN HE'S GONE...
VANISHED TO GOD
ONLY KNOWS WHERE.

uh...?





PART 2



DESTINY.

SOME BELIEVE THAT,
FROM THEIR FIRST MOMENT
OF EXISTENCE, LIFE AS
THEY KNOW IT HAS BEEN
PREORDAINED. THAT
ETERNITY IS CONTROLLED BY
FORCES TOO GREAT FOR
HUMANS TO EVER UNDERSTAND.

**THEY ARE
WRONG.**

WE THINK AS WE
DO, ACT AS WE DO
AS A RESULT OF
WHAT LIES WITHIN.
A SEED HAS BEEN
PLANTED IN EACH
OF US. HOW IT WILL
GROW DEPENDS ON
THE INDIVIDUAL.

THE SEED
IS CALLED
A SOUL.

THOUGH THE BODY EVENTUALLY
DIES, THE SOUL MOVES ON.
ITS ESSENCE IS THE TRUE VALUE
OF EACH OF US, AN ESSENCE
MEASURED BY THE SOUL'S
ORIGINAL POTENTIAL AND ITS
RESULTING CONDITION AFTER
A LIFETIME OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE.

THAT VALUE IS WHAT
THE LORDS OF THE
AFTERLIFE ARE MOST
INTERESTED IN.



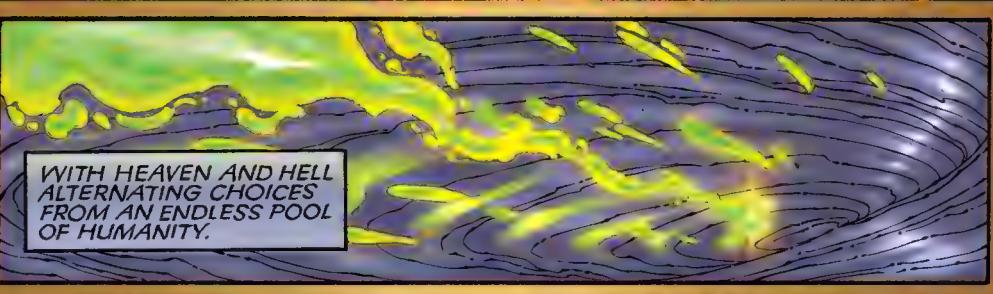
AT DEATH, EACH BEING MAKES THE SAME VOYAGE,
WITH FRAGMENTED MEMORIES SPINNING IN THE VOID.
THOSE SCATTERED IMPRESSIONS SHINE LIKE BEACONS,
SENDING AN UNDOCTORED RESUME OF
THAT INDIVIDUAL.

IT'S FROM THIS
INFORMATION THAT
WE ARE DEALT OUR
FINAL JUDGMENT,
OUR DESTINY.

THERE ARE ONLY
TWO POSSIBLE
OUTCOMES.
HEAVEN
OR HELL.

BY THIS POINT, WE ARE
LOOKED UPON, NOT AS
WHAT WE WERE AT
DEATH, BUT AS WHAT
WE MAY YET BECOME.

IN TERMS
OF BOTH
GOOD AND
EVIL.



WITH HEAVEN AND HELL ALTERNATING CHOICES FROM AN ENDLESS POOL OF HUMANITY.



THE PICKS ARE BASED ON PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS. GETTING TO HEAVEN DOES NOT INDICATE A SPIRIT'S 'GOODNESS' ANY MORE THAN A SENTENCE TO HELL MEANS THERE IS AN 'EVILNESS.'



SOMETIMES THE DECISION IS MADE STRICTLY TO PREVENT THE OTHER SIDE FROM ACQUIRING ANOTHER VALUABLE PROPERTY.

IT'S UP TO GOD-- OR SATAN-- TO EXPLOIT EACH INDIVIDUAL'S STRENGTHS...

...OR WEAKNESSES.

FOR HELL, THE TWO EASIEST ARE ALWAYS REVENGE OR LOVE.

IT'S THE LATTER THAT DAMNED AL SIMMONS.

DEEP IN MANHATTAN'S BOWERY, IT STIRS...

ZZ/Z/Z

"DREAMING OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AND WHAT MIGHT YET BE..."

"...IF THE BALANCE OF THINGS WERE TO SLIP EVER SO SLIGHTLY."

POOP

MEOWW!

IT TAKES A FEW SECONDS FOR THE FACTS TO GARNER A RESPONSE.

HOLY HERPE!
HE'S GONE!

AND HE DID IT TO HIMSELF... THE DOOFUS!

FOR MONTHS NOW, THE CLOWN HAS BEEN TRYING TO PROVE TO HIS HELLISH FORMER MASTER THAT THE NEW SPAWN, LIKE ALL THE OTHERS, IS UNWORTHY OF SUCH VAST POWER.

THE PROPER LEADERS OF HELL'S ARMY, HE CONTENDS, ARE THOSE BORN AND BRED IN THE BLACK ABYSS.

NOW, HIS POINT HAS BEEN VALIDATED.

FOR CENTURIES THIS CREATURE, ONCE HONORED WITH THE TASK OF CHAPERONING EACH OF MALEBOLGIA'S NEW HELSPAWN, HAS DREAMT OF THIS MOMENT.

FROLICKING WITH SOILED DISCARDS AND ROTTED GARBAGE, HIS CELEBRATION REACHES FEVER PITCH.

THEN COMES A THOUGHT...

--AND WITH IT, THE LOSS OF ANY JOY.

WAIT A MINUTE!

SIMMONS IS BACK IN HELL, BUT

DIDN'T PUT HIM THERE! HE SCREWED HIMSELF UP, LIKE A LOT OF THE OTHERS DID.

SO MALEBOLGIA WILL JUST FIND ANOTHER IN A CENTURY OR TWO.

CRAP.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANTED. HE NEEDS TO SEE THAT NO HUMAN SHOULD BE CHOSEN EVER AGAIN. IT'S HIS OWN CHILDREN WHO SHOULD LEAD. WE ARE THE TRUE EVIL.

I NEED TO PROVE THAT TO HIM, ONCE AND FOR ALL...

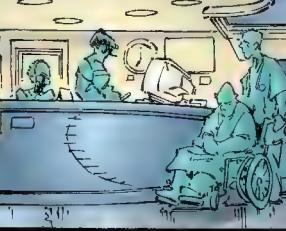
...AND I KNOW JUST WHERE TO START.

A FEW
DAYS
LATER...

AFTERNOON,
MS. BLAKE.

HELLO, DOCTOR.
YOU SAID
YOU WANTED
TO SEE ME.

OUTPATIENT
REGISTRATION



YES. I JUST RECEIVED THE RESULTS OF THE LATEST TESTS. AND TO BE QUITE HONEST, THIS WHOLE SITUATION HAS EVERYONE COMPLETELY STUMPED.

THERE'S NO MORE EVIDENCE OF CANCER ANYWHERE IN HIS BODY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE AREA OF HIS HEAD WHICH WAS AFFECTED IS CLEANER THAN NORMAL. WE'VE RUN EVERY DIAGNOSTIC I CAN THINK OF. EACH RESULT IS NEGATIVE.

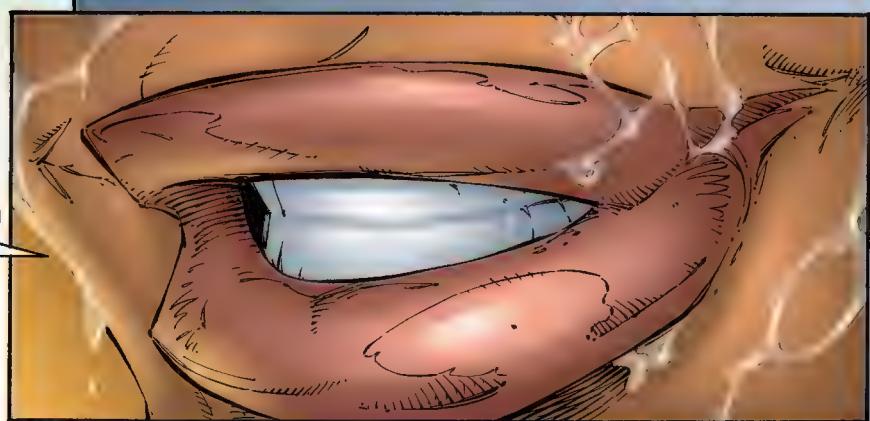
SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

CALL IT A MIRACLE, BUT TERRY IS 100% CURED. SO, UNLESS EITHER ONE OF YOU HAS ANY OBJECTIONS...

... I'M
RELEASING
HIM TOMORROW.
IT'S TIME HE WENT
HOME TO HIS
FAMILY.

THANK YOU,
DOCTOR. AND
IF YOU DON'T
MIND, I'D LIKE
TO TELL HIM
MYSELF.

OF COURSE.



THE DRIVE HOME FOUND THEM WITH LITTLE TO SAY, AND, AS TERRY WIPE A FEW TEARS FROM HIS WIFE'S CHEEK, THE TWO OF THEM FELL SILENT. LOVING GLANCES SPOKE FOR THEM... OF AWE, AND RELIEF, AND THE CERTAINTY THAT BEING WITH EACH OTHER MEANS MORE THAN ANYTHING.

CYAN'S GOING TO BE SO HAPPY TO SEE HER DADDY BACK HOME.

JUST KNOWING I'LL GET TO SEE HER PRETTY FACE AS SHE GROWS UP-- AND YOURS AS WE GROW OLDER--MAKES ANYTHING I'LL HAVE TO BEAR FROM NOW ON SEEM EASY.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW GOOD SHE BEHAVED AT THE HOSPITAL EACH TIME. SHE SURE...

CLICK

SURPRISE!!

FRIENDS.

A THROG OF PEOPLE WHO NEVER BELIEVED A WORD OF THE MURDER ACCUSATIONS GATHER NOW TO WELCOME HIM HOME.

TERRY LOOKS AT EACH OF THEM AND SMILES. HE'LL NEVER AGAIN TAKE TRUE FRIENDSHIP FOR GRANTED.



TERRY GOES ON
GRINNING BROADLY
FOR THE REST OF
THE EVENING.

AND EVEN WHILE INVOLVED
IN CONVERSATIONS WITH
EVERYONE IN REACH,
HE CAN'T SEEM TO STOP
GAZING AT JUST ONE
SIGHT-- HIS WIFE.

HE MAKES SURE
CYAN DOESN'T
FEEL FORGOTTEN
BY RIDING HER ON
HIS SHOULDERS
MOST OF THE
TIME.

HOURS LATER, HE
FALLS INTO A DEEP
SLEEP. BEING IN
HIS OWN BED
BRINGS A CERTAIN
COMFORT: THE
SECURITY TO
RELAX.

AND DREAM
ABOUT PEOPLE
AND THINGS.

THINGS
HAUNTING.

THINGS
FAMILIAR.

AL.

THE DREAM
REPEATS
ITSELF, OVER
AND OVER.

YOU KNOW, THE REAL WEIRD THING ABOUT ALL THIS IS THAT I FELT SOME SORT OF PRESENCE OVER ME, BACK AT THE HOSPITAL.

YOU
MEAN
GOD?

NO... AT LEAST I DON'T THINK SO. IT WAS MORE LIKE... LIKE...

OH, FORGET IT. I'M JUST RAMBLING.

NO YOU'RE NOT. I KNOW WHO IT WAS 'CAUSE I SENT HIM MYSELF. IT WAS AL.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

SURE. WHEN I HEARD YOU'D BEEN HURT, I ASKED HIM TO HELP IF HE COULD.

THEY CALL WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU A MIRACLE. THEY'RE RIGHT. AL SOMEHOW GAVE YOU YOUR LIFE BACK. YOU REMEMBER THAT.

BUT IT'S KINDA FUNNY, YOU KNOW.

WHAT IS?

WELL, AL. HE SEEMED SO TORTURED ABOUT HIS NEW EXISTENCE. SAID HE WASN'T WORTHY OF HIS POWERS. I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHAT IT'S LIKE BEING ONE OF GOD'S CHOSEN ANGELS. BUT HE PROVED HIMSELF BY HELPING YOU.





WITH ALL CONCEPT OF TIME OBLITERATED,
SPAWN'S ETHEREAL PRESENCE BREAKS
THE BLACK VEIL.

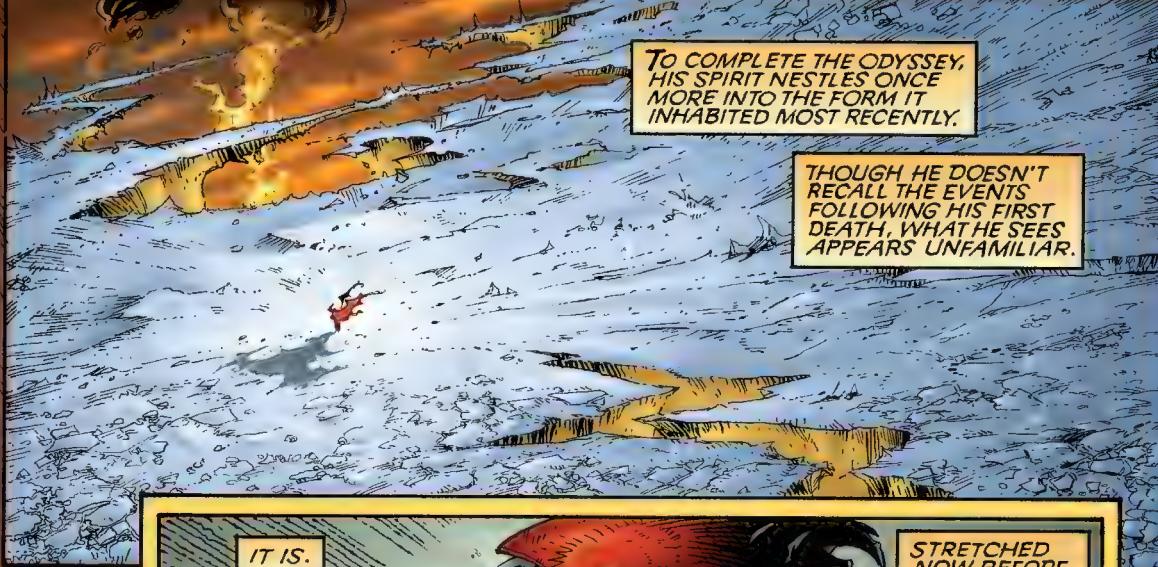
A YEAR?
A DAY?
A SECOND?

NO ONE KNOWS HOW MUCH TIME THE SOUL'S TRANSITION TAKES, BUT DEATH MAKES IT INEVITABLE.

AT THAT POINT, THERE IS ONE RULE ADHERED TO BY BOTH SIDES:

"THOSE SOULS WHO SHALL RETURN TO THE AFTERLIFE PAST THE INITIAL ENTRY WILL FOREVER BE REMANDED TO THEIR FIRST LORD."

IN SHORT, SPAWN HAS RETURNED TO HELL.



TO COMPLETE THE ODYSSEY,
HIS SPIRIT NESTLES ONCE
MORE INTO THE FORM IT
INHABITED MOST RECENTLY.

THOUGH HE DOESN'T
RECALL THE EVENTS
FOLLOWING HIS FIRST
DEATH, WHAT HE SEES
APPEARS UNFAMILIAR.



IT IS.

STRETCHED
NOW BEFORE
HIM IS A VAST
WASTELAND:
HELL'S
SECOND
LEVEL.



AS A FORMER
VISITOR TO
ANOTHER,
HIGHER LEVEL,
HIS PRESENCE
IS ACKNOWLEDGED
IMMEDIATELY:



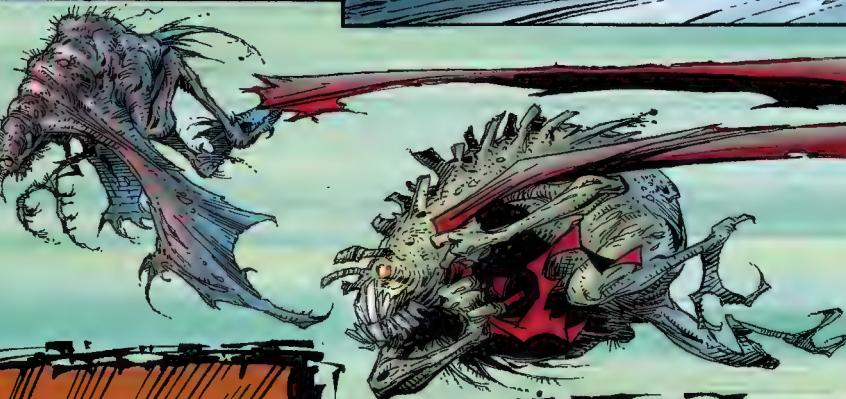
AN ENEMY HAS
TRESPASSED
IN THEIR
SACRED LANDS.

THEY APPEAR OUT OF NOWHERE... GNATS... THAT Gaping Wound IN HIS FACE, NO LONGER TIED SHUT, ALLOWS THEM TO DIG DEEPLY.

WHILE HE'S DISTRACTED, THE GROUND ITSELF JOINS THE FRAY, SWALLOWING ONE LEG AND HOLDING IT IN A DEATH GRIP.

IT'S ONLY THE START.

HELL-
TONE



ANOTHER WAVE CONVERGES, SCREAMING PAST THE CLOAKED HERO. SUDDENLY, THEY SNATCH A FEW OF HIS CAPE'S TENDRILS.

THEIR ATTACK IS FAR FROM RANDOM, HE REALIZES.

THEN, BURROWING UNDERGROUND, THE LEATHERY CREATURES DISAPPEAR.

THE HELLSPAWN IS NOW PULLED TAUT AS A STAKED TENT.

INTRUDERS WILL
NOT BE PERMITTED--
EVEN THOSE FROM
OTHER LEVELS.

NEK-TORR

NEK-TORR

NEK-TORR

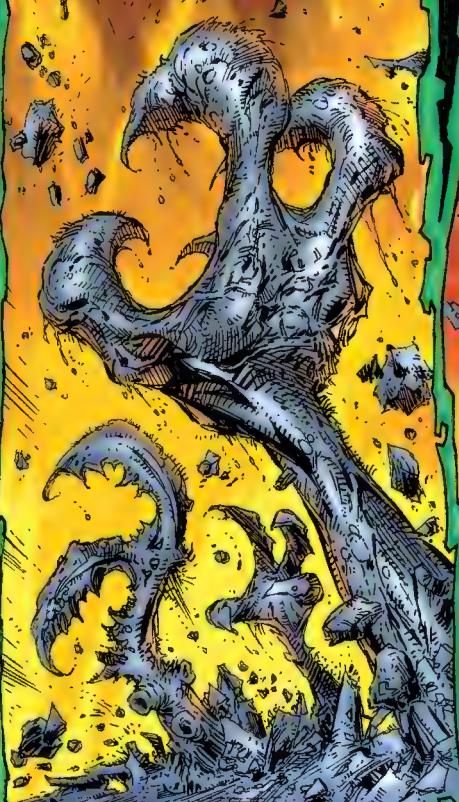
NEK-TORR

NEK-TORR

THE UNHOLY LAWS
REQUIRE THE
STRAINS REMAIN
PURE.

HYBRIDS WILL
ONLY DESTROY
THEIR UTOPIA.

YET, WITHOUT
THE HYBRIDS,
THEY CANNOT
LIVE.



AND SO, INTRUDERS THAT
HAVE TRIED TO CROSS THE
VOID INTO THE NEXT LEVEL
ARE PUT TO A PURPOSE
BEFORE THEY DIE THE
DEATH OF HELL.

NEK-TORR

NEK-TORR



INSANITY SPIRALLING AROUND HIM, SPAWN TRIES TO KEEP A GRIP, EVEN AS THE WEIGHT OF THE DEMON HORDE PREPARES TO SUFFOCATE HIM.

NEK-TORR

THROUGH THE CRACKS, THE SMALL ONES GET THERE FIRST.

IS HIS VISION BEGINS TO BLUR, AL SIAMONS WONDERS WHAT HE DID TO DESERVE THIS FATE -- THIS CURSE OF THE SPAWN.

WAS IT THE KILLINGS?

HE WAS ONLY FOLLOWING ORDERS, HE THINKS.

TOTAL DAMNATION FOR ANY MURDERER, THAT'S WHAT IT MUST BE.

THEY ARE NOWHERE. THEY ARE EVERYWHERE.

FIGHTING EACH OTHER FOR POSITION.

SO HE GIVES IN AND GOES LIMP, JUST AS THE PARCHED LAND GOES BLACK.

NEK-TORR!

BUT HELL, LIKE
HEAVEN, WAS
NEVER MEANT
FOR MAN TO
UNDERSTAND.

IT'S A PLACE OF
PAIN, HORROR,
ANGUISH, FAR
BEYOND ANYTHING
POSSIBLE ON EARTH.

NEK-TORR
MEEEE!

YET, AS ON
EARTH, A
PECKING
ORDER HAS
EVOLVED--ONE
PREDICATED
ON SIZE, NOT
SURPRISINGLY,
RESENTMENT
EXISTS.

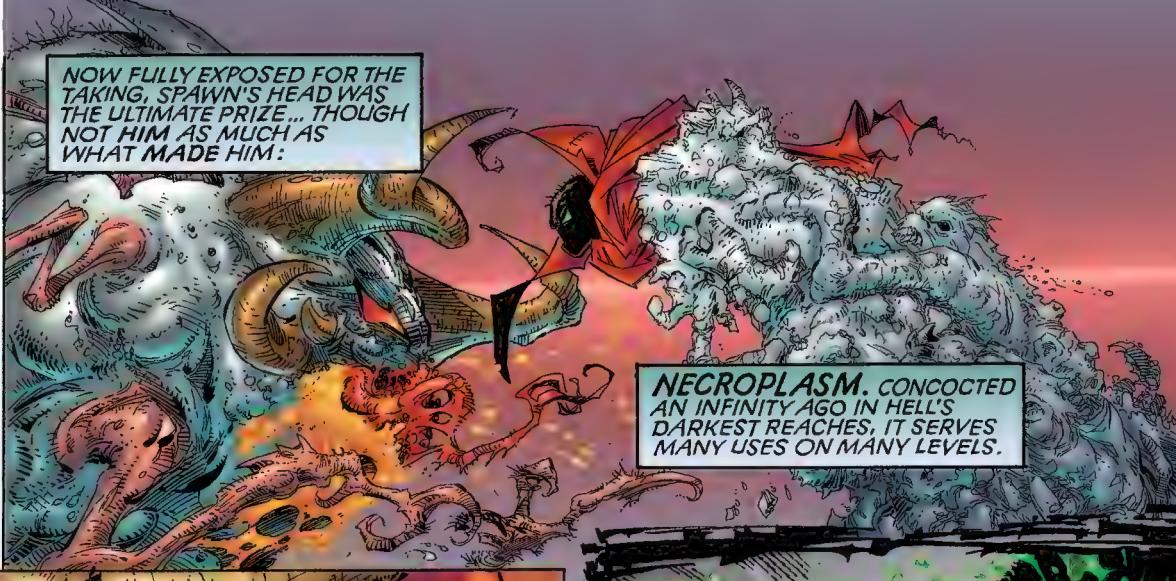
THEY FOUND
HIM FIRST,
THE SMALL
ONES DID.

A PILLAR
OF THEIR
REMAINS
PETRIFIES
IN A HEART-
BEAT...

THEY'LL NOT
LEAVE HIM
BEHIND.

NEK-TORR!

...LEAVING
JUST AN
EXPOSED
TIP.

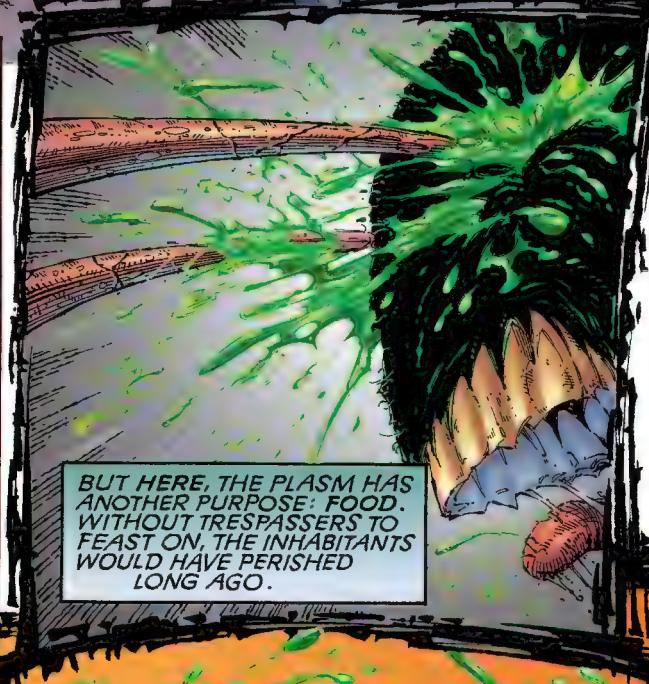


NOW FULLY EXPOSED FOR THE TAKING, SPAWN'S HEAD WAS THE ULTIMATE PRIZE... THOUGH NOT HIM AS MUCH AS WHAT MADE HIM:

NECROPLASM. CONCOCTED AN INFINITY AGO IN HELL'S DARKEST REACHES, IT SERVES MANY USES ON MANY LEVELS.



IN MALEBOLGIA'S REALM, IT'S WHAT HIS WARRIOR'S ARE MADE OF.



BUT HERE, THE PLASM HAS ANOTHER PURPOSE: FOOD. WITHOUT TRESPASSERS TO FEAST ON, THE INHABITANTS WOULD HAVE PERISHED LONG AGO.



SO, EACH VICTIM BECAME THEIR VITAL NOURISHMENT.

THEIR CALORIES.
THEIR JUICES.

THEIR SWEET
NECTAR.

SPAWN WILL HAVE NONE OF IT. IF HE IS TO DIE HERE, THEN HE MEANS TO TAKE AS MANY OF THEM WITH HIM AS POSSIBLE.

HE THOUGHT HE'D JUST GIVE UP AND DIE. HE CHANGED HIS MIND.

GREEN ENERGY CRACKLES. SINCE HE'S A PRISONER OF HELL, WHAT DOES SPAWN CARE ABOUT CONSERVING HIS POWERS ANY LONGER?

Lt. COLONEL AL SIMMONS HAS ONE MORE FIGHT LEFT IN HIM.

FOR A HUNDRED MILES THE SKIES TURN GREEN.

IT'S HIS WAY OF EXORCIZING HIS OWN PERSONAL DEMONS.

HIS WIFE IS LOST TO HIM.
FOREVER.

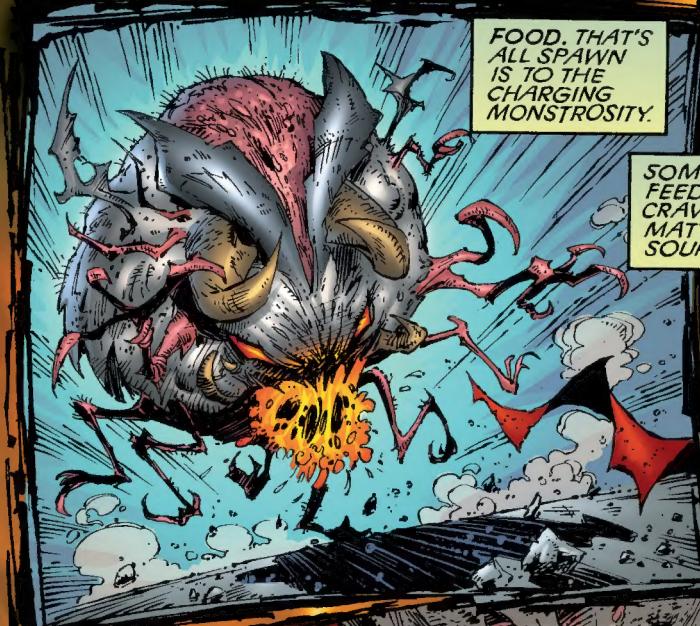
SHEER ANGER IS ALL THAT COMES FROM THAT THOUGHT.

**PREPARE,
DEMON, TO EAT
YOUR **HEART!**!**

**ADRENALINE
IS TRIGGERED.**

**RELEASING
ONCE AGAIN
THE TRUE SPIRIT
OF THE WARRIOR.**

**BRACED AGAINST
PETRIFIED DEBRIS,
HE STANDS READY
FOR ATTACK.**



FOOD. THAT'S ALL SPAWN
IS TO THE
CHARGING MONSTROSITY.



SOMETHING TO
FEED ITS
CRAVINGS. NO
MATTER THE SOURCE.



IF
YOU'RE SO
GODDAMNED
HUNGRY...



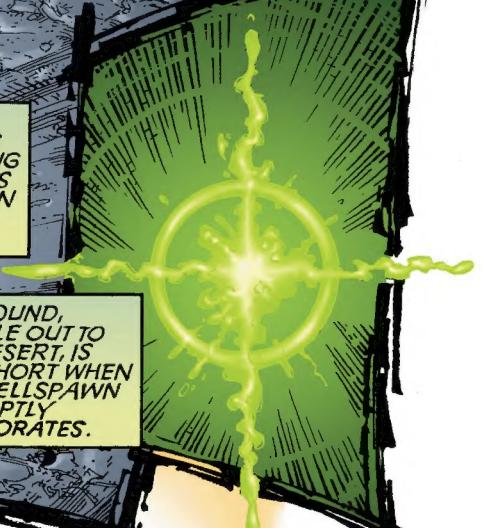
...CHOKE
ON THIS!



LIKE SOME CRAZED
TARZAN, SPAWN CLIMBS
ATOP HIS KILL. FROTHING
AT THE MOUTH, HE LETS
RIP A NOISE NO HUMAN
COULD POSSIBLY
CONCEIVE OF.



THE SOUND,
AUDIBLE OUT TO
THE DESERT, IS
CUT SHORT WHEN
THE HELLSPAWN
ABRUPTLY
EVAPORATES.



ELSEWHERE
IN TIME...

Perfect!

It went just as I'd planned. My little Spawn has just picked up the first of his new gifts.

Unknowingly,
of course.

C'MON,
HONEY!
TIME TO GO
HOME. THANK
MEGAN FOR
INVITING
YOU TO HER
PARTY.

BALLOON!
BALLOON!

A few
more pieces
and my 'Grim
Reaper' will be
ready. Enjoy
your next level,
Simmons.

THANK
YOU. BYE-BYE.
I'LL SEE YOU
SOON.

Hee hee
hee
hee
hee
hee

THERE
YOU ARE,
DEAR,
SWEET
CYAN.

YOU'RE FUNNY.





EMPIRE

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